

**Remarks by Ambassador Zumwalt
Closing Ceremony for FLINTLOCK 16
St. Louis
Monday, February 29, 2016**

(As prepared)

Senegalese Army Chief of Staff General Kane,
Commander of the United States Africa Command General David M. Rodriguez
Commander of Special Operations Command-Africa Brig. Gen. Donald C. Bolduc,
U.S. Ambassador to Mauritania Larry Andre,
Ambassadors and representatives of participating nations,
Chief of Staff of Defense Forces for Mauritania,
Senior military leaders,
Officers,
Soldiers and distinguished guests,

What a pleasure it is to be back among you 21 days after the start of Flintlock 2016 - the largest Flintlock exercise ever, with participation of 28 countries from Africa, North America and Europe. Twenty-one days in which 2,200 soldiers, including most of you here today, worked side-by-side across Senegal and Mauritania to improve interoperability and cooperation among our regional and international security forces with the aim of combating terrorism across borders.

Whether it was riverine training here in Saint Louis, law enforcement exercises in Thies, mobile medical clinics in Bakel and Kedougou, or crisis response exercises in Matam, the tremendous success of this year's Flintlock exercise is due to your efforts to strengthen regional civil and military cooperation.

The fact that today's ceremony is held in Saint Louis is particularly appropriate – and indeed purposeful - given its proximity to Flintlock's co-host and partner Mauritania. I am especially pleased that my good friend, the United States Ambassador to Mauritania, Larry Andre could join us today.

As I noted at the beginning of Flintlock 16, our goal was to work together to enhance cooperation and to counter terrorism and violent extremist ideologies. As a result of our partner's joint efforts, we have accomplished this goal and are now better prepared to protect the peace and security of our peoples.

As President Obama said last year, Africa's progress depends on security and peace -- because an essential part of human dignity is being safe and free from fear. And as you stand against terror, we stand with you and will continue to support you.

But as we know, collective security does not just rest on military cooperation. It is about forging strong relationships with the civilians you protect. The people best know their own communities and are your allies in rooting out potential terrorist threats. Through your civil exercises and outreach, whether providing medical assistance in remote areas, or joining forces

with nine other Senegalese NGOs including the Ministry of Environment to clean Yoff beach, Flintlock 16 has built trust and earned the respect of the community.

I want to give special recognition to our hosts. First Senegal, who, did an incredible job hosting this substantial exercise for a third time. With the participation of your military, your gendarmes, the national police, prosecutors and judges, Senegal has been an exceptional partner, and I thank the government of Senegal and the Senegalese Army for your strong support. Against the backdrop of uncertainty and fear after the attacks in region, you have shown that a strong democracy and civil society can confront the terrorist's agenda of fear and uncertainty.

I also want to thank Mauritania for co-hosting Flintlock 2016. And I would like to thank all the partner and observer countries for their contributions and active participation. As the annual Flintlock exercise grows, and as our multilateral partnership strengthens, so does our collective security.